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OO RUEHDE RUEHDH RUEHDIR
DE RUEHAD #0634 1730406
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 220406Z JUN 09
FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2634
INFO RHMFIUU/SECNAV WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1322
RHBVAKS/COMUSNAVCENT

UNCLAS ABU DHABI 000634

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARP; NEA/PPD; NEA/RA; INR/R/MR; PA; INR/NESA; INR/B;
RRU-NEA
IIP/G/NEA-SA
WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE; NSC
SECDEF FOR OASD/PA
USCINCCENT FOR POLAD
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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: SPECIAL MEDIA REACTION: TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS REPORT ON
UAE

REF: ABU DHABI 626

¶1. Summary: UAE reaction to the 2009 Trafficking in Persons report was limited to one report and one op-ed piece by a UAE writer. The report, in the Dubai-based English-language daily "Gulf News" 6/21, cited UAE officials in the field of law and welfare describing the report as disappointing and failing to reflect realities on the ground. The op-ed, in Arabic daily "Al-Ittihad," claimed that such reports aimed at vilifying the UAE's image and set obstacles against its efforts in the field of human trafficking. End summary.

¶2. Dubai-based English daily "Gulf News" (circulation 95,000) carried a story 6/21 on page 6 citing UAE officials sharply criticizing the report. The headline read: "U.S. Human Trafficking Report disappoints UAE officials. It fails to reflect ground realities in the country." Officials quoted in the report included Afra Al-Basti, CEO of the Dubai Women and Children Foundation, who noted that "the report does not reflect the reality in the UAE and many of the efforts carried out by the government to combat human trafficking were only briefly cited." Lieutenant General Dahi Khalfan, Commander of the Dubai Police, questioned the credibility of a nation "that violates human rights in front of the whole world," adding that "our conscience dictates our efforts, not the U.S. government." Federal National Council members Rashed Musabah al Kindi and Abdulrahim Shahin agreed that the report was not fair to the UAE. Al Kindi remarked, "Keeping workers' passports is the employer's right and not a violation for human rights as stated in the report." Shahin added that the report overlooks efforts the UAE government has taken in combating trafficking, including hosting a recent Human Rights Watch conference.

¶3. Ali Abu Reish wrote in his 6/19 op-ed piece in Abu Dhabi-based semi-official Arabic "Al-Ittihad" (circulation 65,000)

"Despite all of the UAE's efforts against human trafficking and its hopes to become a model for the region, you still see poisonous reports coming out from the U.S. Congress. These reports aim to vilify our image and set obstacles against our efforts.

The UAE not only did what it had to do, but it also went the extra mile. No developed country has ever done this. The UAE is a green oasis that opens its doors for everybody; it does not have double standards, and it offers equal rights based on justice and human rights protection.

But it seems that there are some who are not impressed by wonders. They are people whose measure of justice is based on public moods. Such people do not do any good for humanity; instead, they spill dust on clean spots. They send messages filled with accusations in order to spread heinous rumors against a country that has known nothing but love for all people.

We hope such reports, for once, could be based on facts and not just bubbles meant to cause confusion and satisfy certain sides."

Greene